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Penciled Impressions

— 1918 — 1919

Pencil Sketches *Here and Over There*

1918-1919

by

George W. Straub
Sgt. 326 F. Sig. Bn.



159-P-1
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A Calendar of the 326th Field Signal Battalion

January 16, 1918—Organized at Camp Wadsworth, Spartanburg, S. C.

August 7, 1918—Left Camp Wadsworth for Port of Embarkation, Newport News, Virginia.

August 14, 1918—Left United States onboard U. S. S. Koningin den Nederlanden.

August 25, 1918—Arrived at Brest, France.

August 29, 1918—Left Pontanezen Barracks, Brest.

Sept. 2, 1918—Arrived at Remiremont, Vosges, (Village of Seux) and assigned to the 7th Army Corps.

Sept. 6, 1918—Moved to Victor Caserne, St. Etienne.

Nov. 8, 1918—Moved to Rambluzin, Meuse.

Nov. 17, 1918—Moved to Laheycourt and Noyers.

Nov. 21, 1918—Moved to Dun-sur-Meuse.

Nov. 23, 1918—Moved to Virton, Belgium.

Dec. 5, 1918—Moved to Grevenmacher, Luxembourg.

Dec. 14, 1918—Moved to Wittlich, Germany.

March 12, 1919—Reviewed by Major General William G. Haan.

April 25, 1919—Reviewed by General Pershing.

May 26, 1919—Left Wittlich, Germany.

May 28, 1919—Arrived at Sable-sur-Sarthe, France.

June 9, 1919—Left Sable-sur-Sarthe for Brest.

June 17, 1919—Left Brest, France onboard U. S. S. Mobile.

June 27, 1919—Arrived at Hoboken and Camp Merritt, N. J.

June 29, 1919—Battalion split into Casual Detachments.

July 3, 1919—Final reports and returns made.

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INTRODUCTION



IF YOU were guaranteed another such trip as Sergeant Straub has sketched here would you re-enlist? Or is once enough but not too much? This brings up the subject of the next war, for which we all have our own plans, no doubt. After those four days in *Hommes* 40, *Chevaux* 8 from Brest to Remiremont, some of us concluded that we'd be *chevaux* in the next war; they don't travel so numerously, and they're used to sleeping on their feet. So far as is known the only man of the 326 who had a good sleep during those four days was Woytisek, who stretched his belt out full length, passed it around a stanchion and under his arms, and slept. He needn't worry about the next war, with such talent. Besides, he'll probably have lots of room in his *Hommes* 40, because the rest of us are either going to be horses or officers.

Some even say that the next war will be "For Officers Only", but that remark must be discounted a bit, being a direct steal from a sign frequently seen in the A. E. F. There is some basis for the opinion, however, for the officers have an easier time of it than

even the *chevaux*. There was Lt. Kahn, for instance, who ran (it seemed as if he were running, didn't it?) so cheerily at the head of the column on that hike into the mud around Rambluzin and Benoit-Vaux. He didn't have a pack with three blankets and a bed sack and rations and an overcoat and a leather jerkin and a few things like that to carry. Of course, we didn't carry them all the way—they were dumped in a Frenchman's cart and got lost up near Verdun, where they shook with the noise of the guns. Those packs got further into action than the rest of the 326, which is a shame.

Then there was our Major, Simpson. He was so successful in his anti-tobacco crusade at Remiremont that he was promoted to Lt.-Col. and left us in a cloud of smokes. Various other officers got balled up and left us for one reason or another, and Lt. Duncan, having failed to get a transfer to the infantry, dashed to Company C, which he tried to prove to himself and the company was the next best thing.

Meantime the non-officers were making various discoveries, such as the cost of cognac (yes, it is pronounced "coney-ac") in francs and days in the guard-

house; how to say "Promenade? Mademoiselle?"; how to get everything but their eyes under cover when the German plane came over; where to buy chocolate; that the French children would beg cigarette like this: "Cigarette? Cigarette?" and smoke them too; and many other essentials.

One of the greatest discoveries was that of the French name for cheese, which is *fromage*. We all soon liked the French condensation of assorted odors called *fromage*. One man, however, forgot the name just as he got in the shop, and after much stuttering grabbed his nose, made a terrible face, and did a circle with his forefinger. Then, all smiles of comprehension, sympathy and eagerness to be of service, Madame took him by the arm and led him out to the family latrine.

That was worth going all the way to France for—and it wasn't the only or the first time that we made startling discoveries in unexpected ways. For instance, what the Y entertainer had in the pocketbook she dropped at Coblenz—but that, to quote Kipling, is another story.

After the Battle of Remiremont those who survived the hike and didn't drown in the mud and didn't get sent off on telegraph, telephone or wireless

details amused themselves and kept the officers out of mischief by policing up the woods. At least that's what we gave out we were doing, but the chief products of our searches were souvenirs and such essentials as fire-building materials in the form of dead branches and live cartridges. About this time, also, numerous experts in shirt-reading developed. The result of stopping in an open place in the woods to read a shirt was a high rate of mortality.

Though none of us had any dope except the usual rumors, we were only marking time for the Armistice, which we heard about bright and early on the morning of November 11. After we had listened to the official French, German, and English wireless dispatches ringing the bell on the fight we gave a yell—and resumed the hunt. From that time on more and more of us began to do real work, until the Top Sergeants had terrible times picking K. P.'s. This, and a striking scarcity of mail, pained us exceedingly, but instead of moving west, each jump took us north. We were "picked troops for the Army of Occupation".

Would you have missed it? Dun-sur-Meuse, for instance. Straub couldn't show it in his sketches, but it was there, in a shell hole in a German graveyard, that a new use was discovered for Signal Corps pliers.

They make good souvenir-tooth pullers. The man who extracted the German tooth says he is going to patent a muffler to absorb the disagreeable moist clock that you hear when a tooth comes out of a decayed socket. It was here, too, that one of the Mess Sergeants sought distraction from his troubles by cane-hunting in the trenches. The cane was mostly buried in some fresh earth and it had a grand handle entirely. Remembering tales of man-traps, he scoured about for some wire, respectfully lassoed the cane, retired hastily to the other end of the wire, and, holding his breath, pulled. He got neither a cane nor an explosion—only a handle.

Virton came next, where the people were so glad to see us and waved home-made flags of dress-goods and even of paper. Here Acting-Top Sergeant Hegna of Co. A earned fame by picking some seven men as "available for K. P." and crowning the indignity by posting their names where all could see.

After Virton came Grevenmacher, which mostly seemed bewildered—and more commercial in the matter of souvenirs. Then came Germany and Wittlich with its billets, the best the 326 had yet struck. Some of us seemed to think that Germany should be given credit for those billets, and that it was a pretty

nice country. Of course it's natural to curse out a place where we have difficulties, even though they may not be the fault of the place. Also it's natural to like a country where we have better treatment, even though the improvement is due to the fact that the country is untouched by the war; that we took what we wanted, as conquerors; and that the Germans faithfully obeyed the propagandist "look pleasant" orders from their own leaders on the other side of the Rhine.

It was a long wait at Wittlich, enlivened by Paris leaves and other distractions, but we finally got out of there, and now we're where we belong. To each one of us these sketches will bring varied memories, back in the ease of home. What we have been through has been too big to be grasped all at once. Perhaps on the spot we were too busy—even kicking—to "get" it all; perhaps we were too harassed, too much in the midst of things, to get the proper perspective.

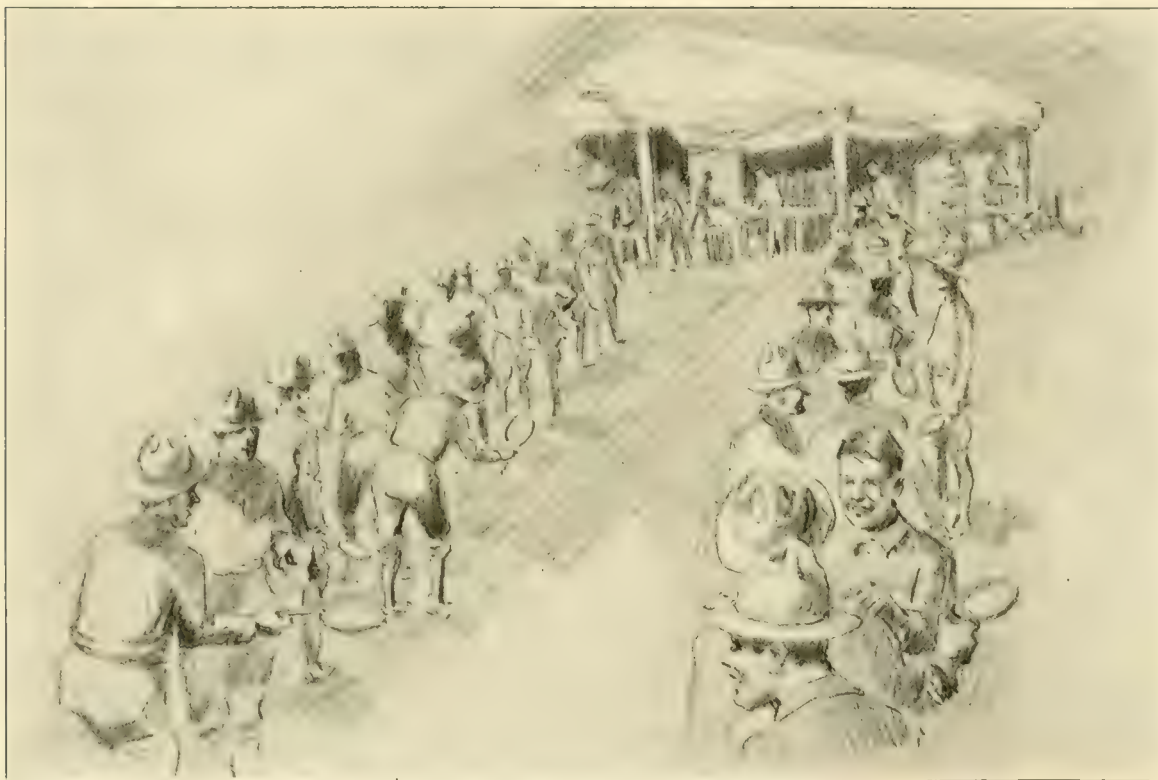
Here is your chance, men of the 326. Take a look at your trip from American eyes, from your eyes, from those eyes set comfortably in your own head and that head and all the rest of you sitting pretty right at home.

CORP. S. WARD SEELEY.

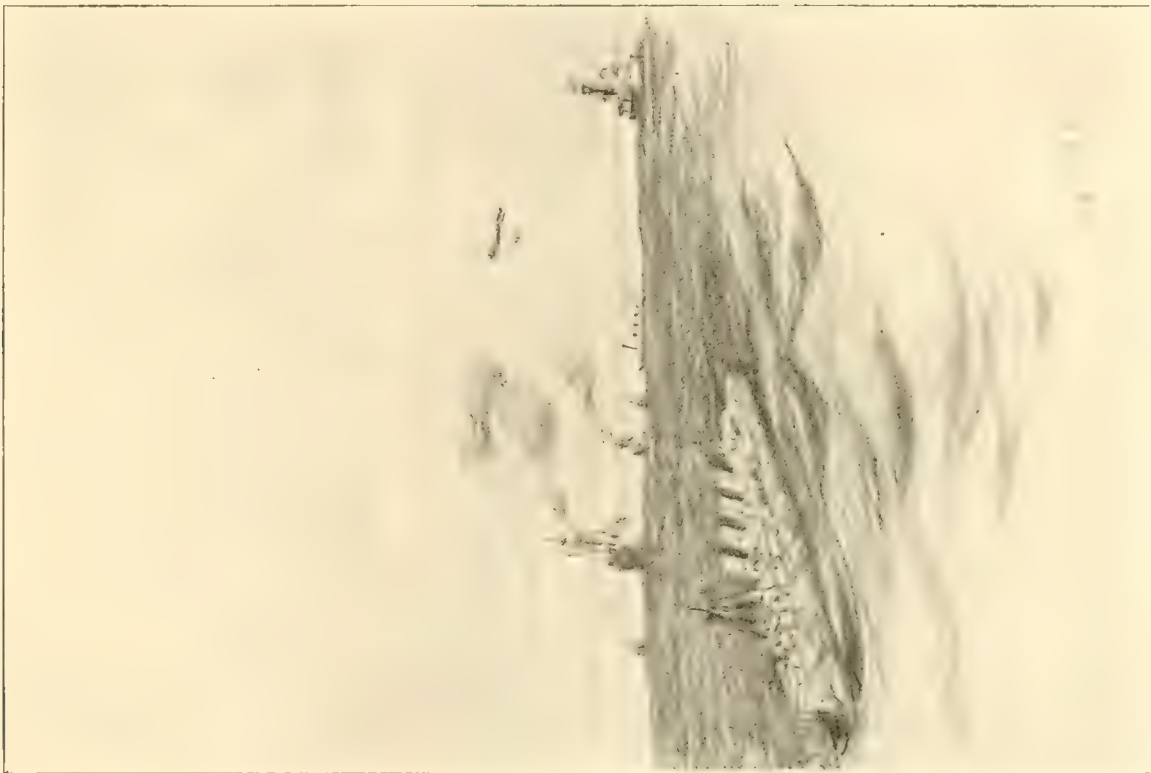
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*Disillusioned but not
telling the folks—
First day in the
army*

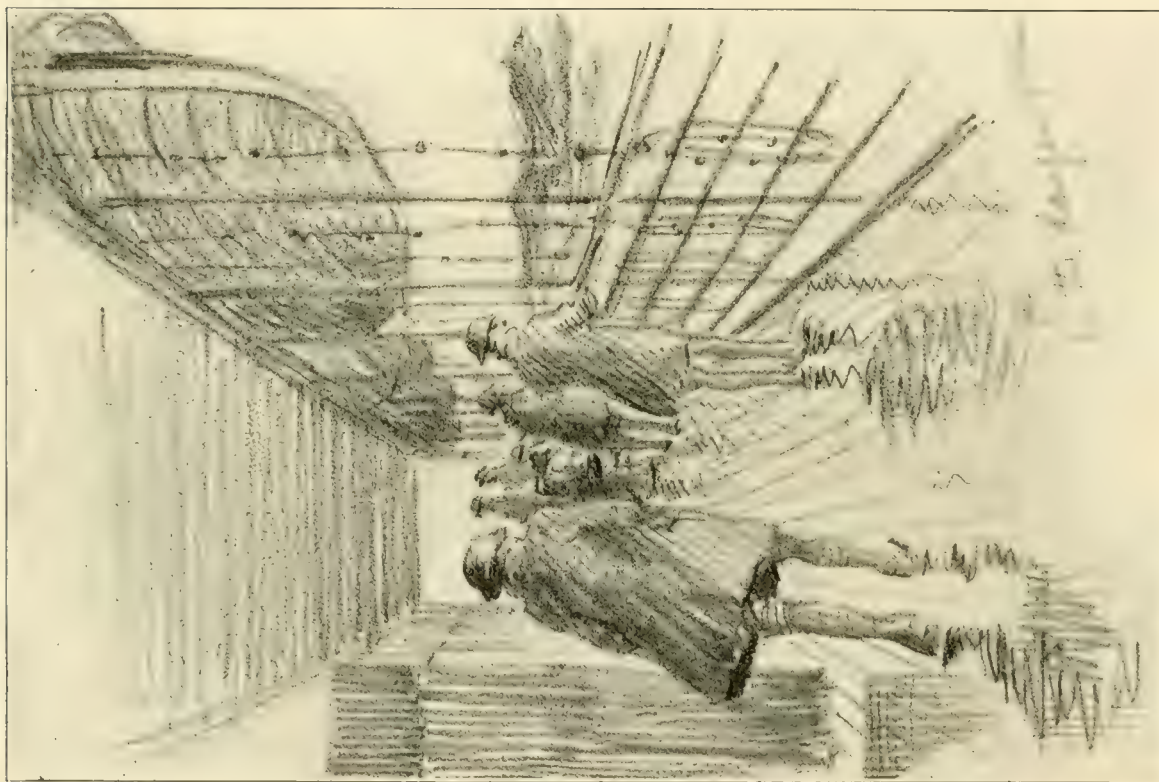




*The chow line at
Camp Wadsworth*



*The morning of the
tenth day*



*Buck's promenade—
on the Koningin
den Nederlanden*

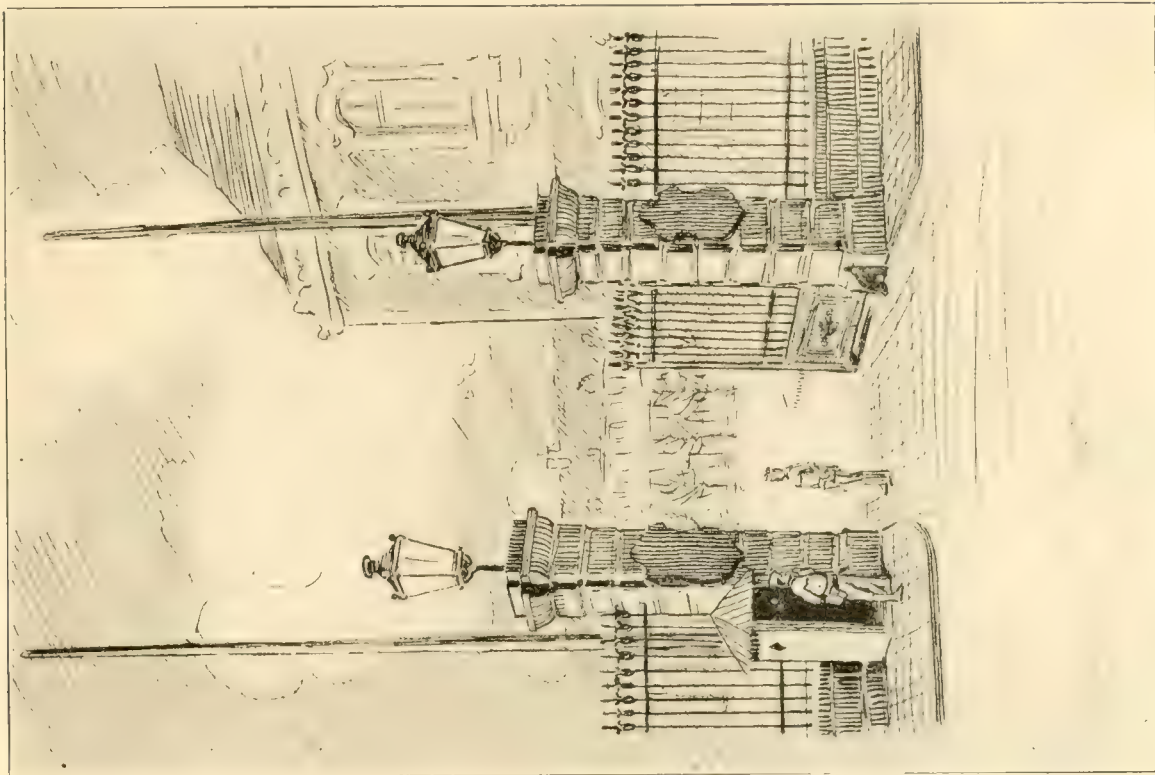


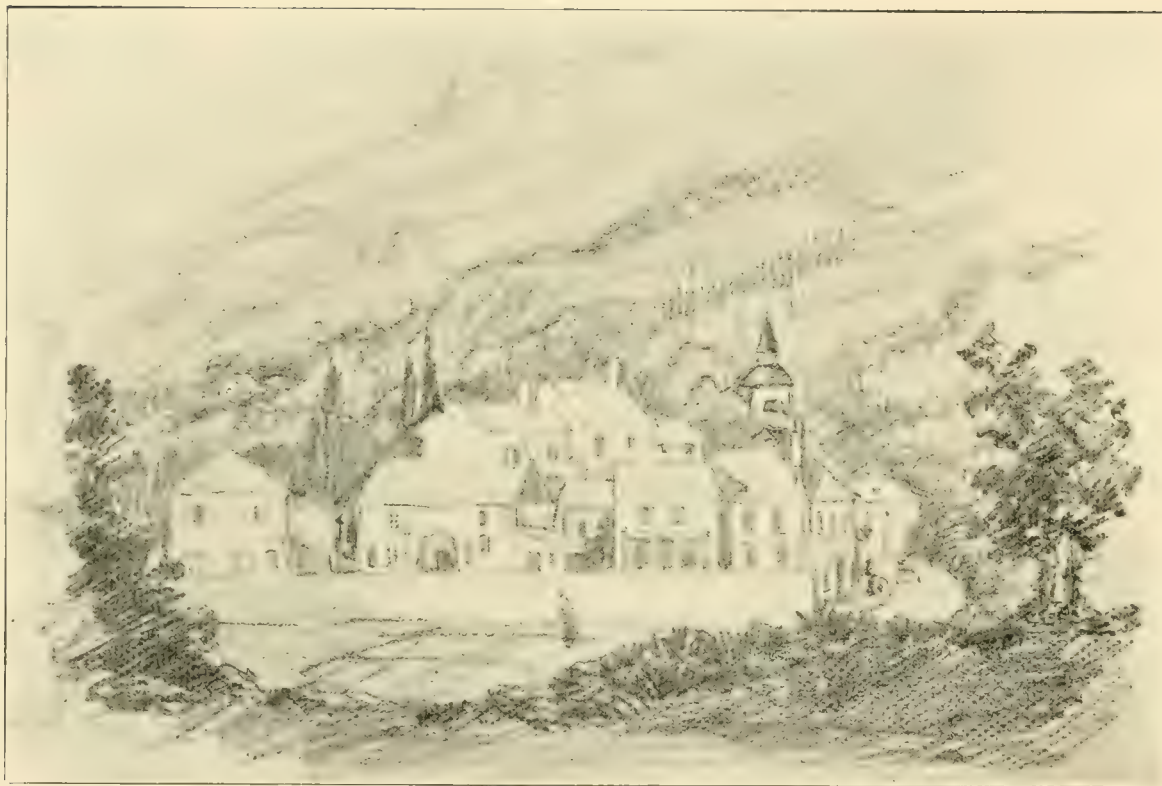
*And Jim blew that
damned horn
all day*



*Up the valley
in the Vosges*

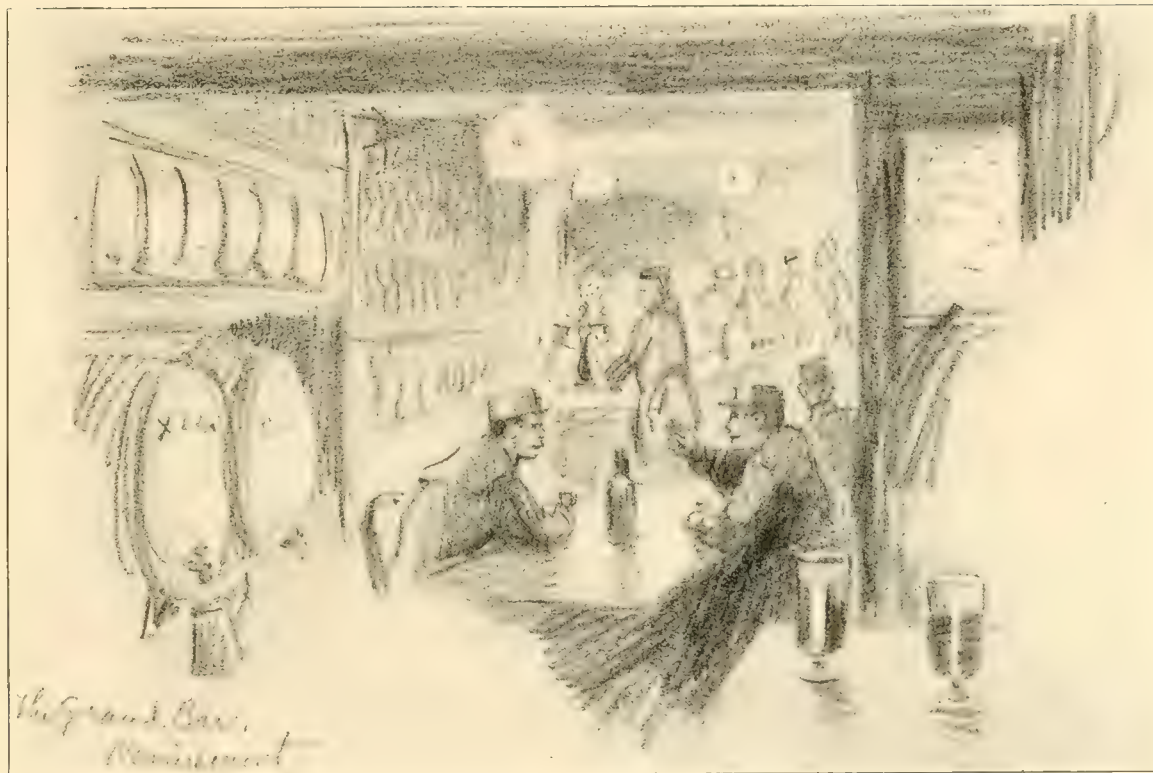
Post No. 1
Caserne Victor





*St. Etienne—where
pomme de terre and
manure were heaped
high*

*Biggest in town
for 45 centimes*



*Wherever the loaf,
there also the
bottle*





*Everybody helped
who could*



*Here's where we used
to meet 'em*

*A Sunday
soccer game*





*“Wee, wee,
promenade
sus swar”*

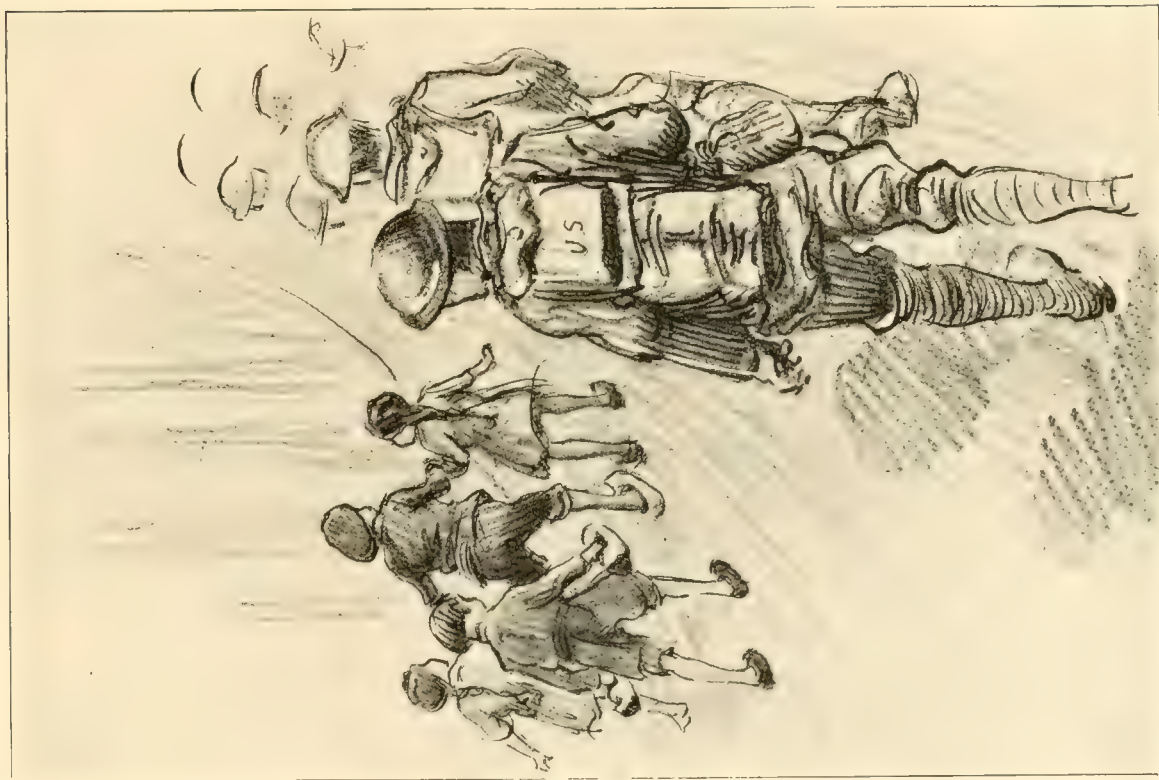
*A little misery
for the rest*





*The furlough
everlasting*

*The little frogs
always followed*



*Left on the Western
front when
Russia quit*



*They're damned
uncomfortable too*





From the book by the author

*To sleep with
the horses*

*Remiremont;
a serious
occupation?*





Up the mountain

*We leave
Remiremont*





*Hell on wheels—
“Hommes 40
Chevaux 8”*

*We unloaded at
Bannoncourt—
then hiked*



*Mud and rain —
nothing else*





*Full of rats
and cooties*

Boys who paid all





*Heippes — little
village near
Verdun*



*“Oh yes, when we
were in the
Argonne, etc.”*

Night raid





*A cross road village
near Verdun*



*Argonne prisoners
at Souilly,
November, 1918*

*Three kilos
back of our camp*

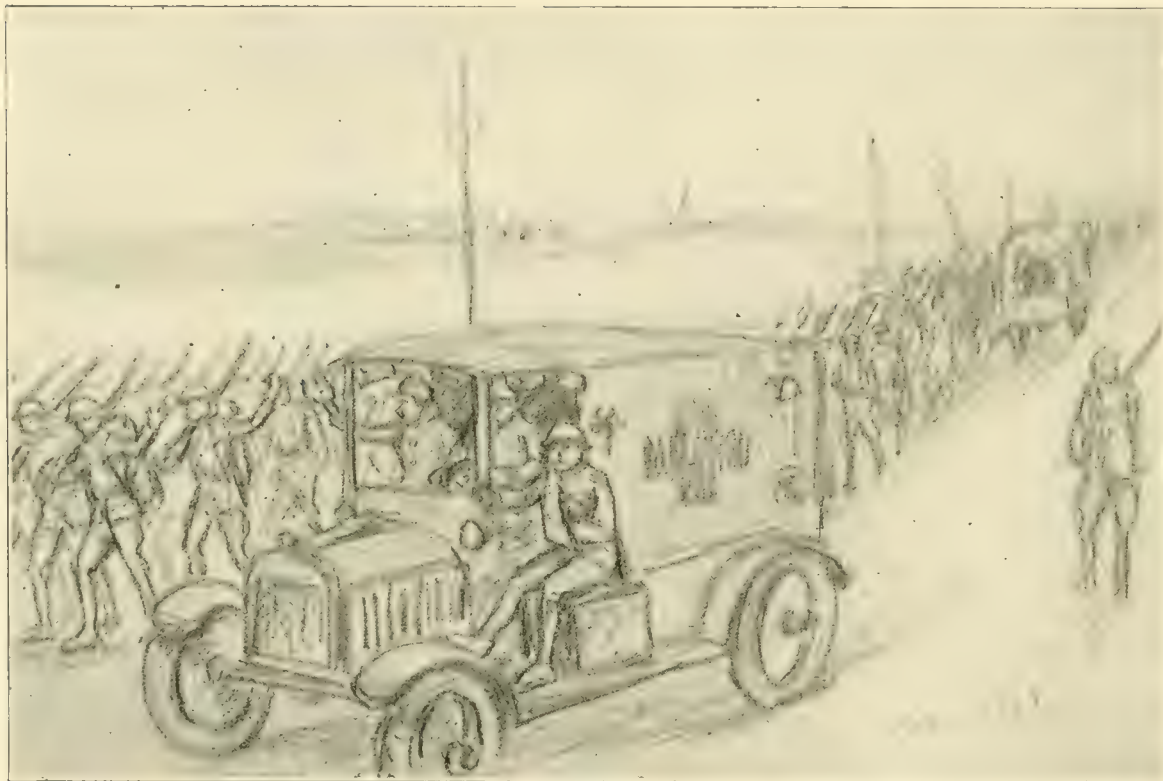


*St. James' Gen'l Hq.
1914-1916*

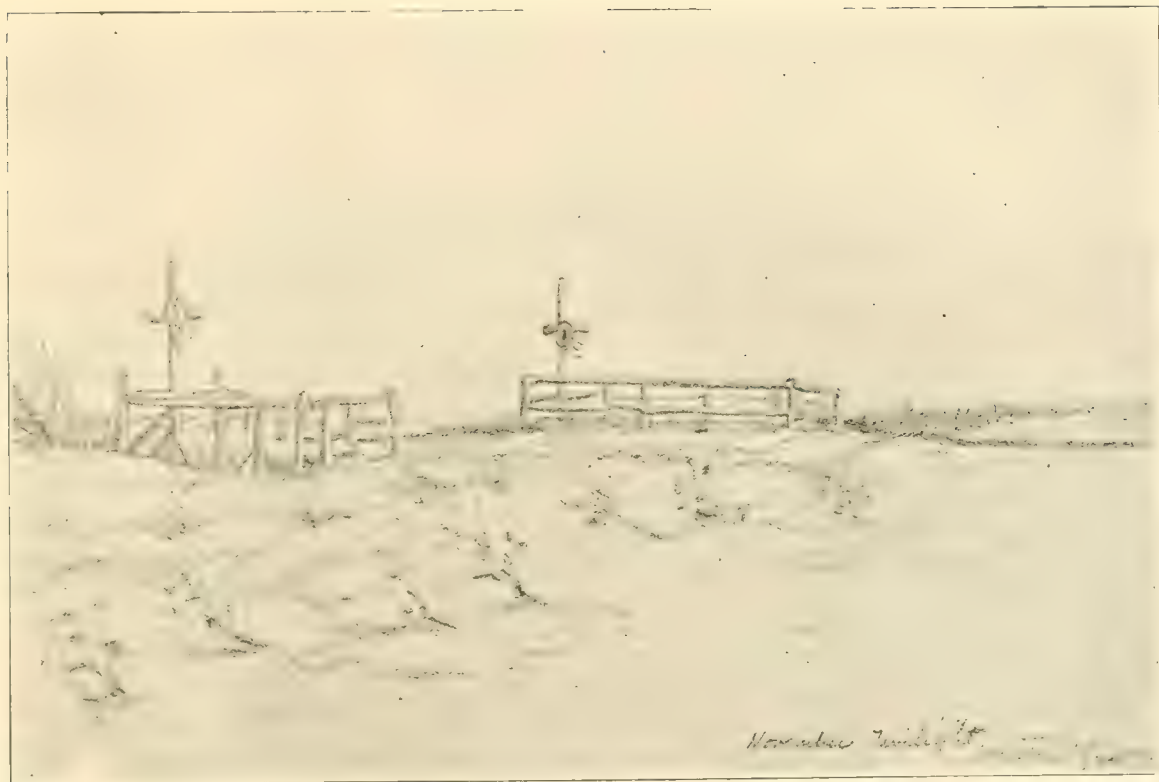


*General view
of Souilly*

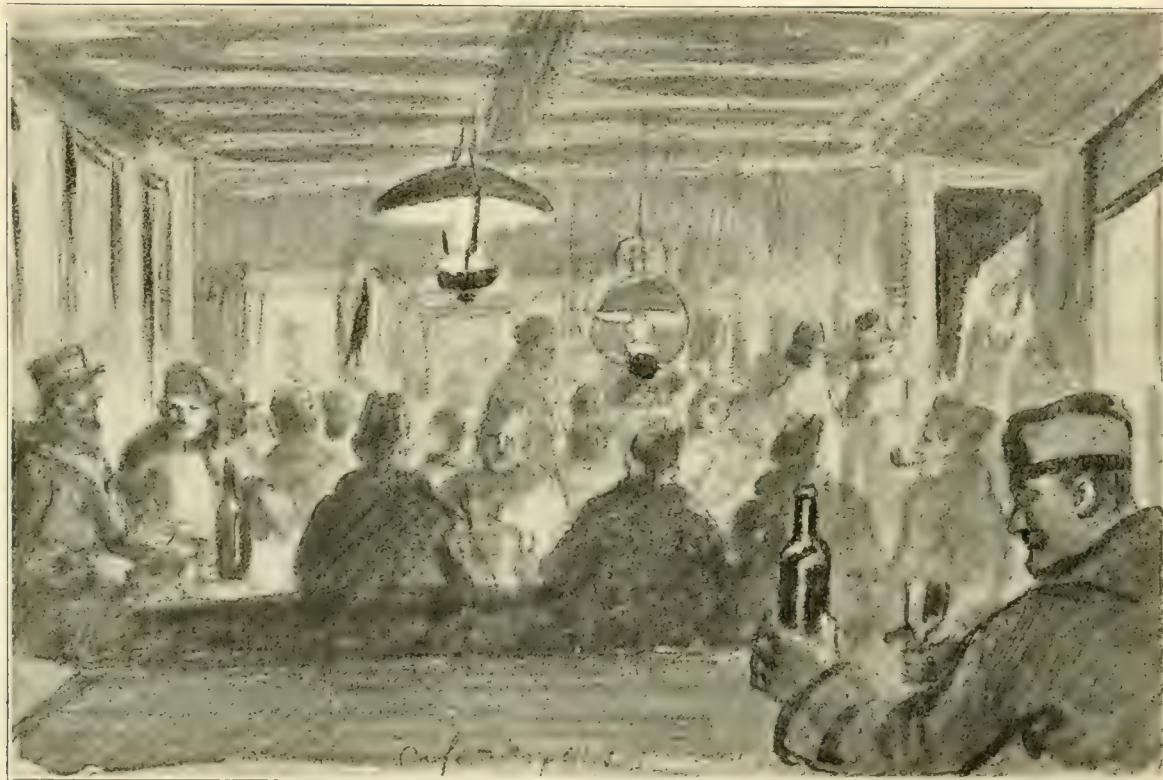
*26th Division
marching back to
Bar le Duc*



*Buried where
they fell*



November twilight

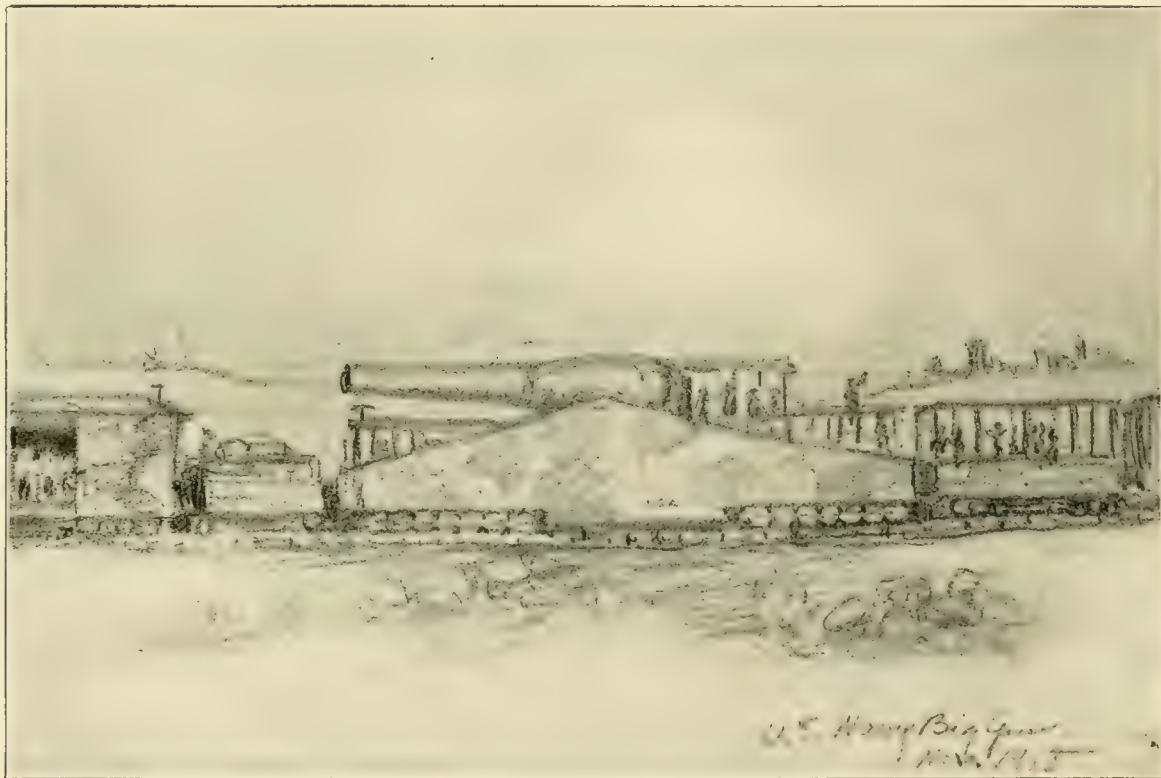


*That war-relict, cafe
at Noyers*

*Just another C Co.
orderly room*



Metz special





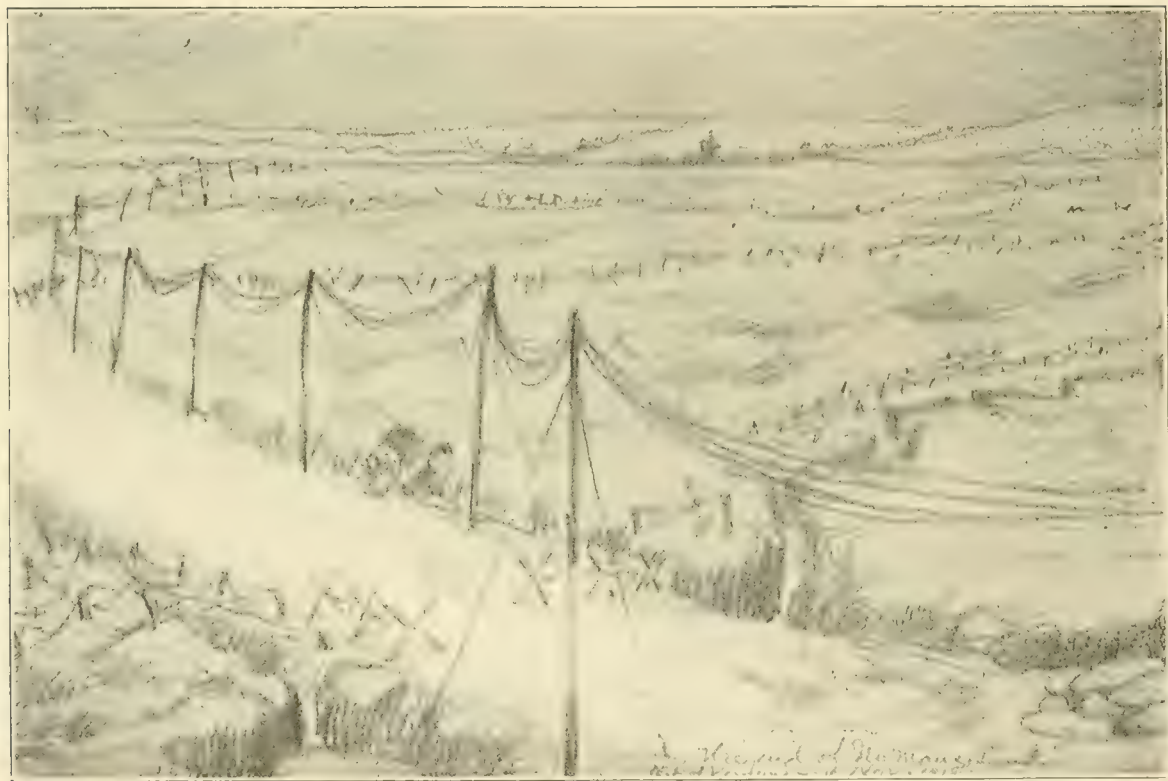
Luxuriant quarters



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*Whippet tanks
at Varennes*



*Mopped up by the
Yanks N. E.
of Verdun*



*The everpresent
M. P. looking
things over*

*Along the river
at Dun*

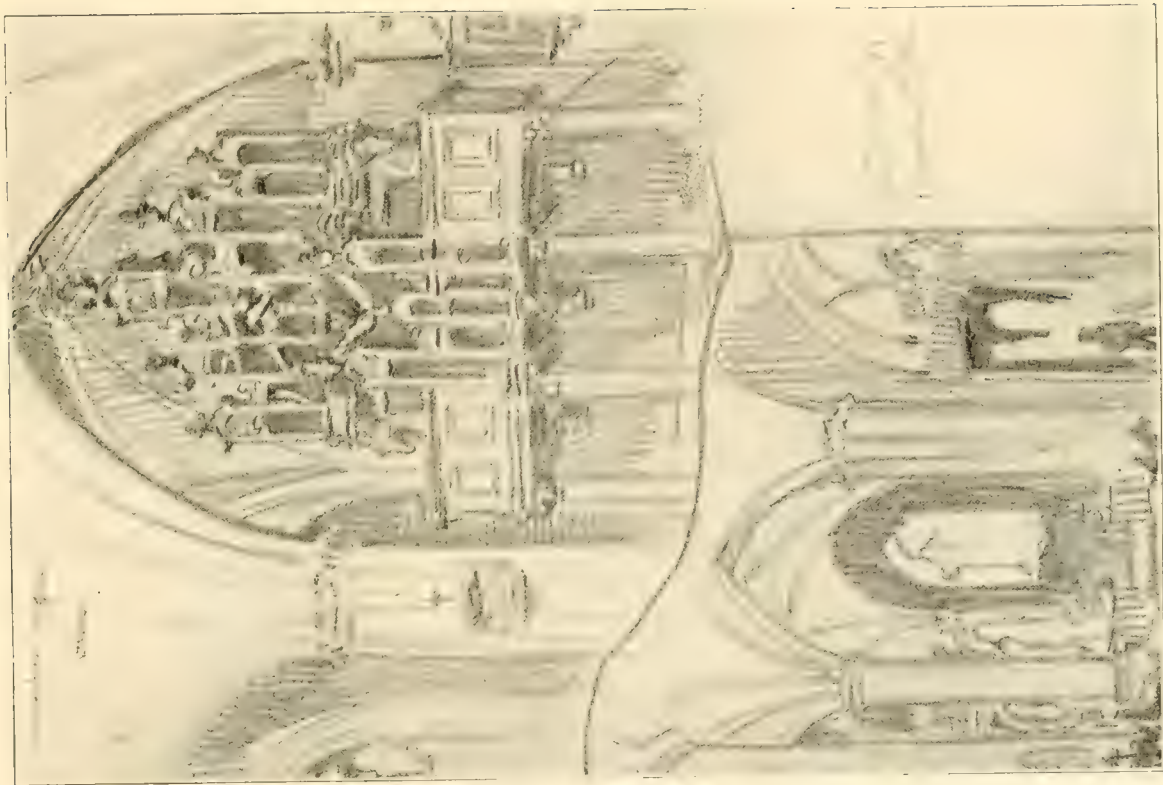




One of many such



*After four years' exile
in Belgium; the
return home*



*One of
war's crimes*



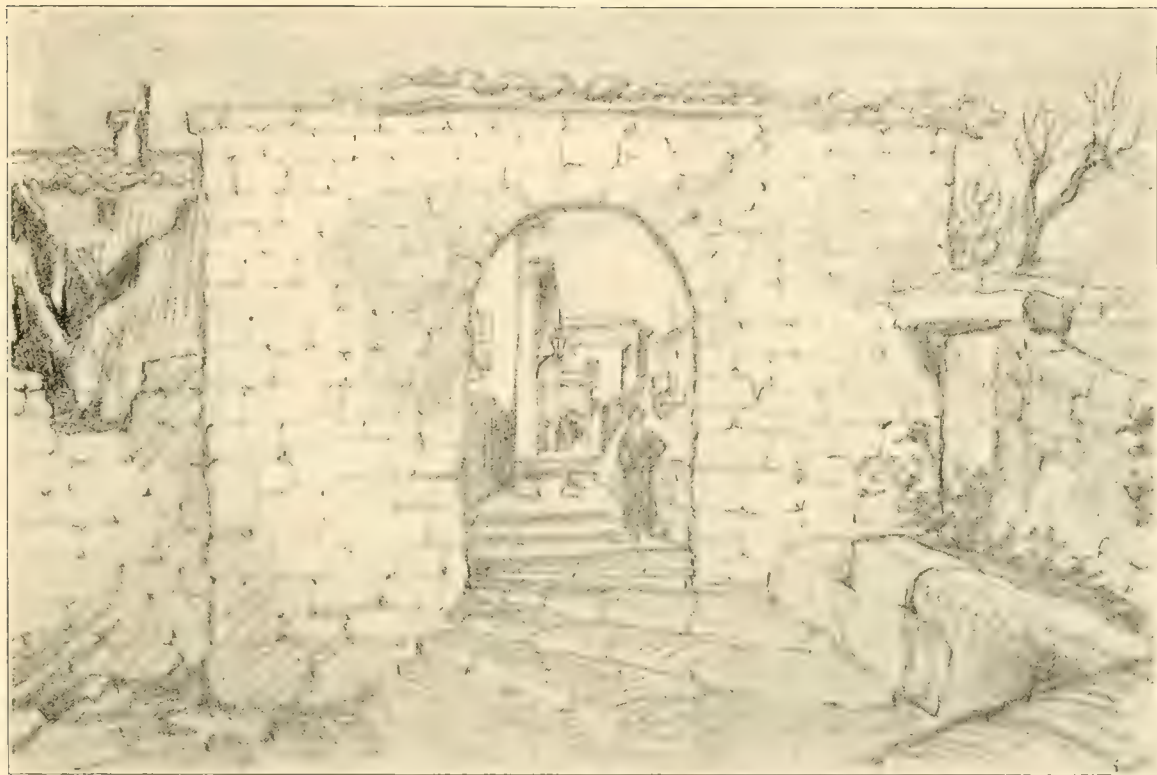
*Where Johnnie
ruled supreme*



*The walled old upper
town of
Dun-sur-Meuse*

*Beaucoup
boche souvenirs*





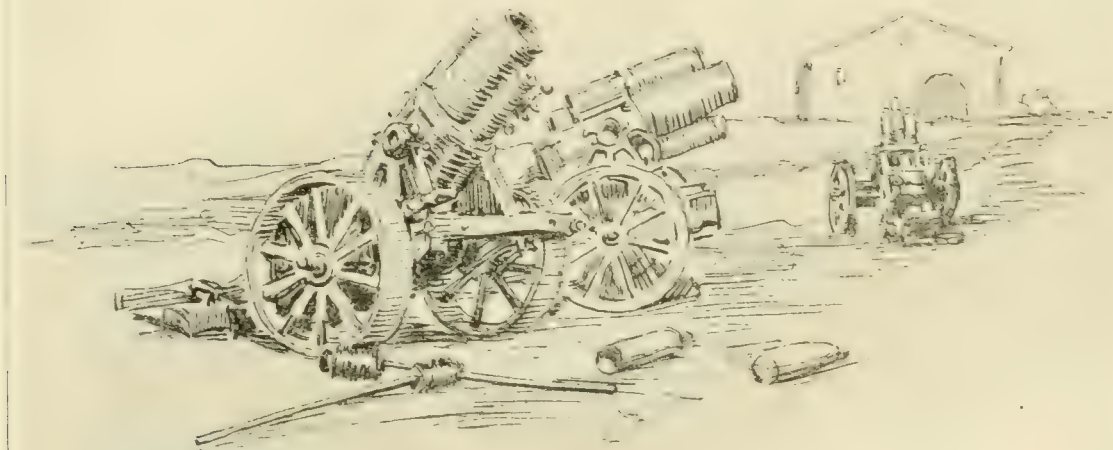
Old gateway at Dun



*Those birds even
had stores in 'em*



*Graveyard of a
German flying
circus near
Longwy*





*Chopped to pieces by
their own pilots,
scores of them*



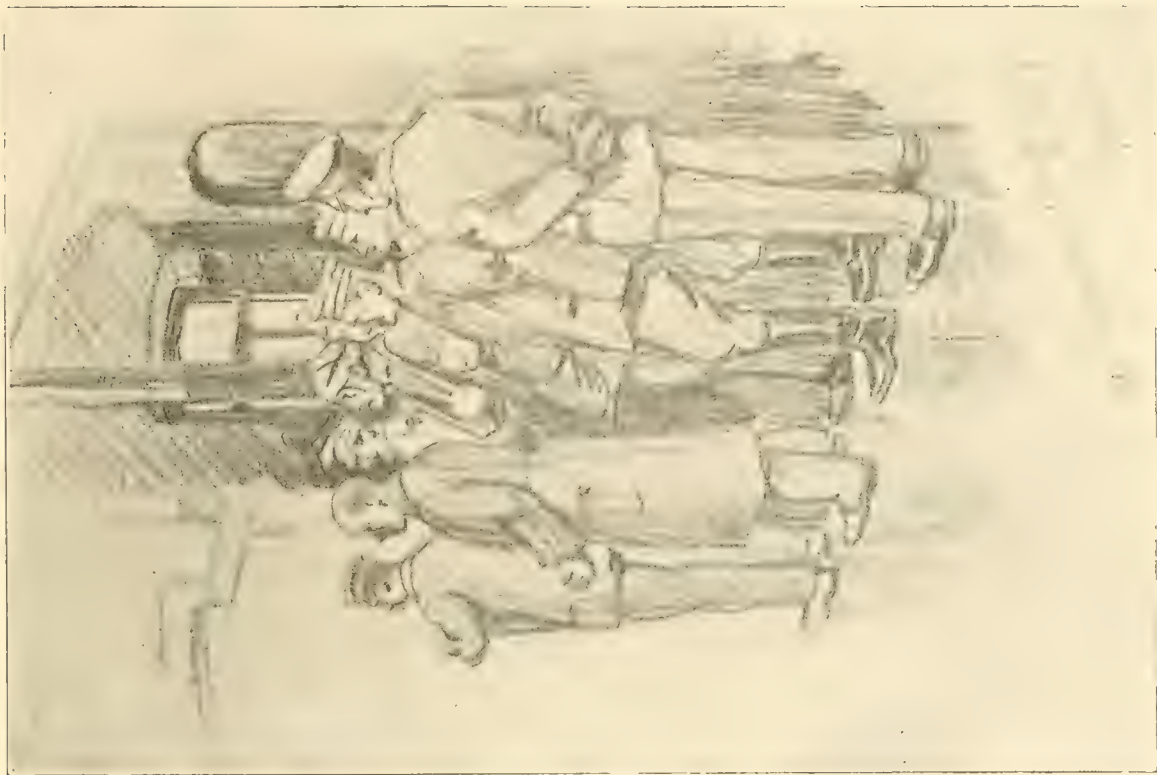
*Belgium — odd clocks
and grain coffee*



*Did you
understand him?*



*Odd, quaint
cobble streets*



*German wounded—
wonder what they
thought?*



*Gen. Haan speaking
— Thanksgiving
Day — Virton*

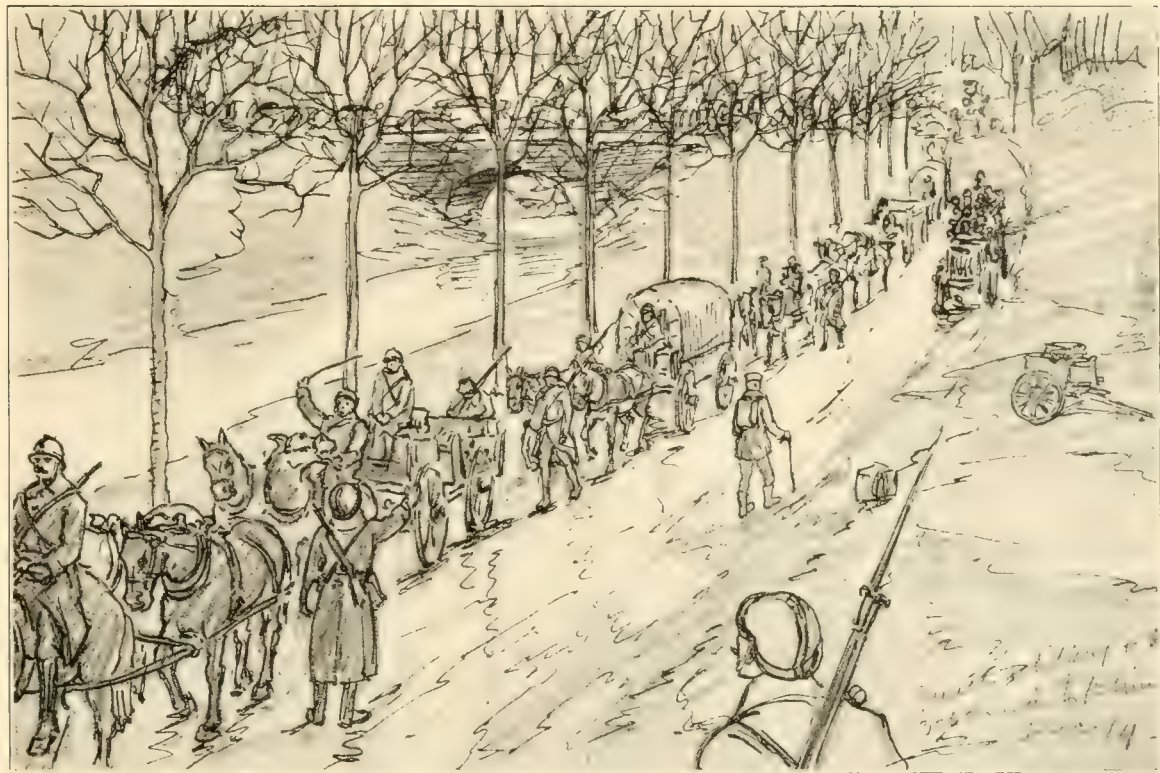


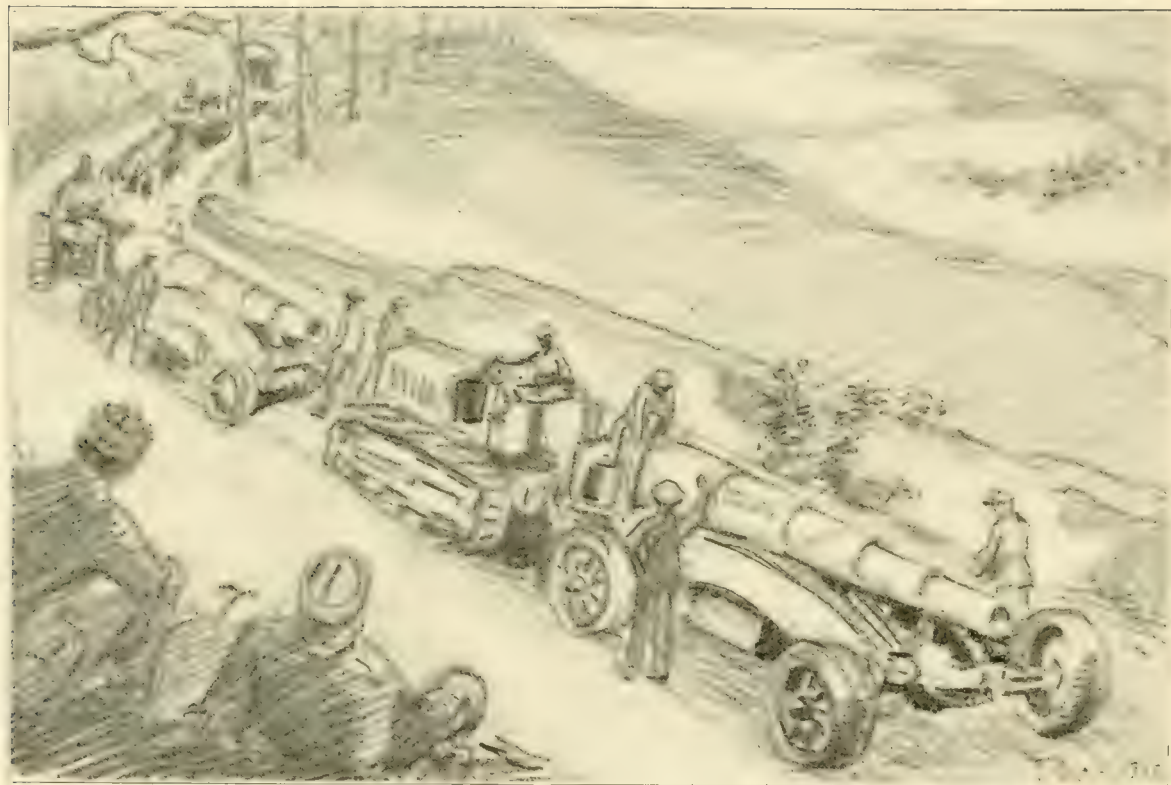
*Where "Schnapps"
that powerful
enemy, was first
met and downed*



*Rain, stinking hay,
misery; C Co.'s
quarters*

*Making for
the Rhine*





*Persuaders going
into Germany*

*Pretty big,
wasn't it*

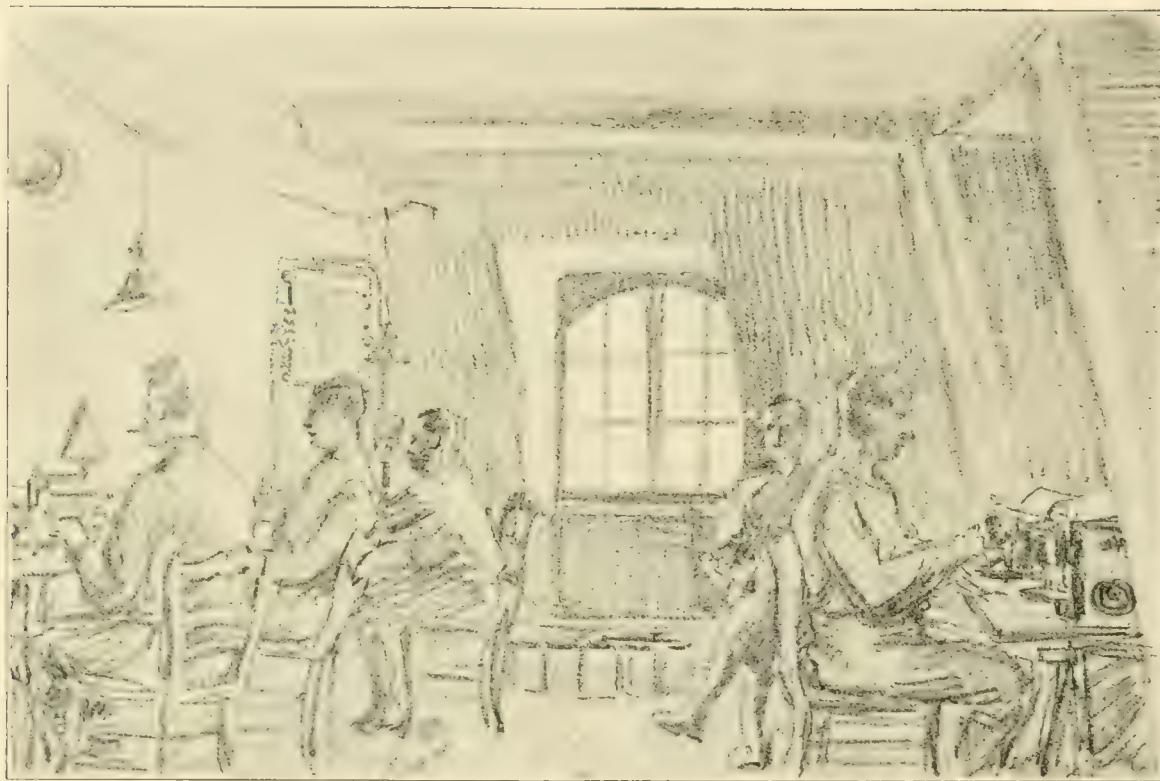


*A corner most
familiar*





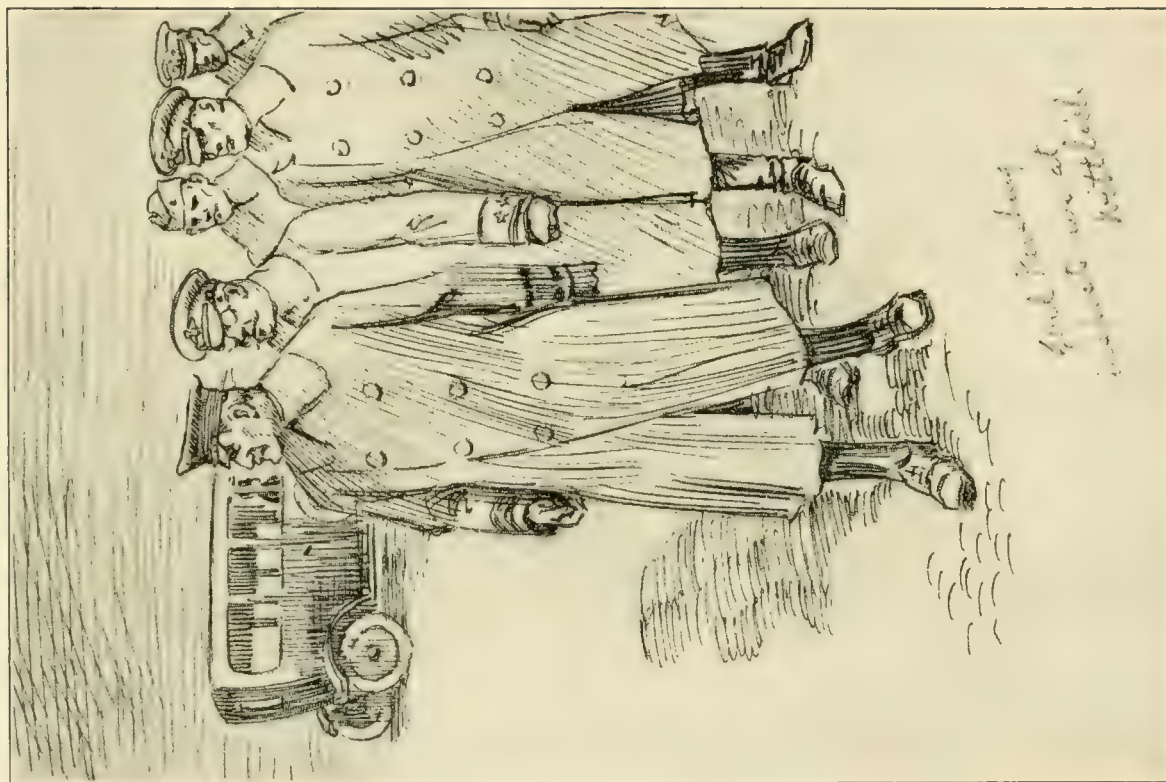
*Monotonous comfort
at last*



*The Corps' Telegraph
office—Wittlich*



A Co. Radio Room
—Wittlich

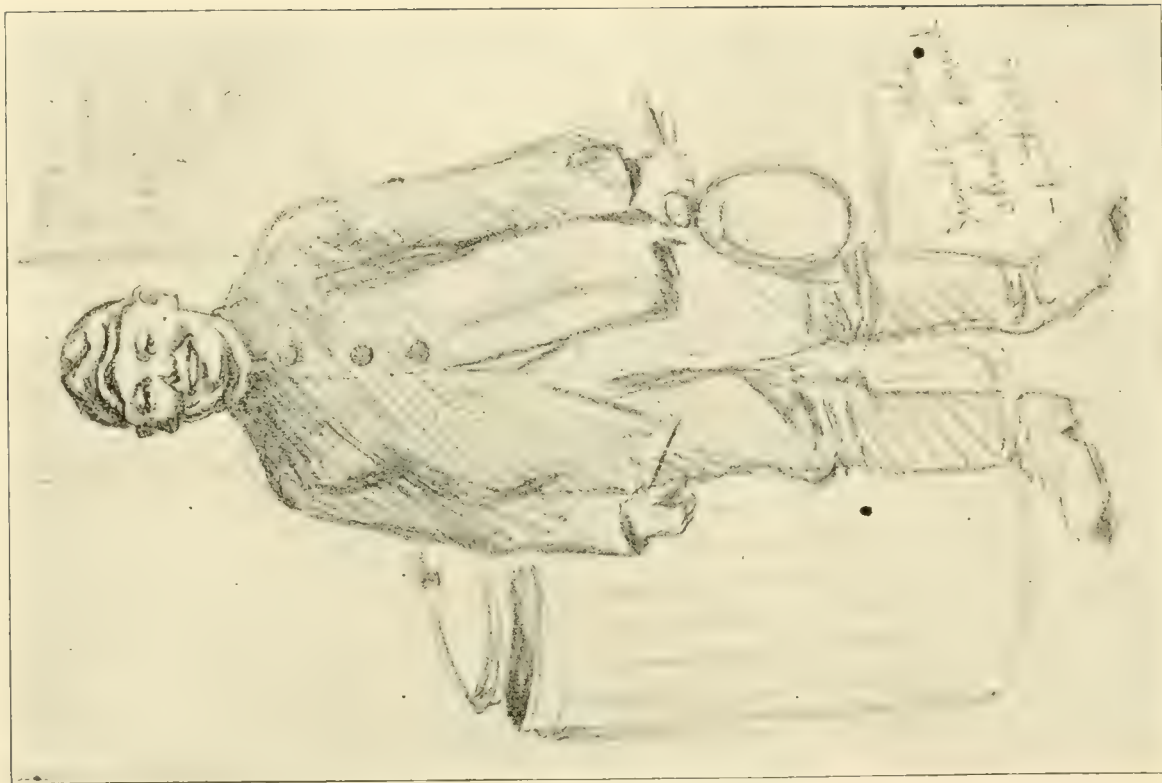


*"He sez to me,
sez he"*

*And then they
said to me at last
"He sez to me at last
sez he"*

Some birds





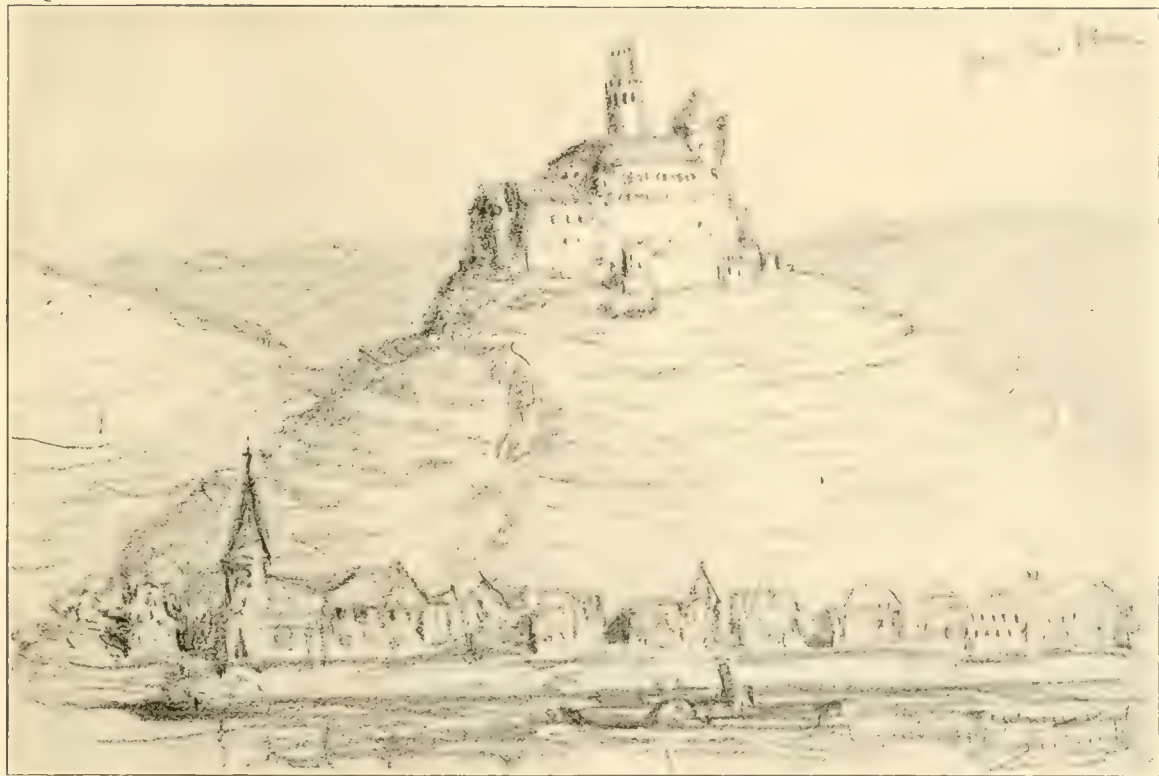
*Friend of the
mess sergeants*

*The old Roman gate
at Treir*



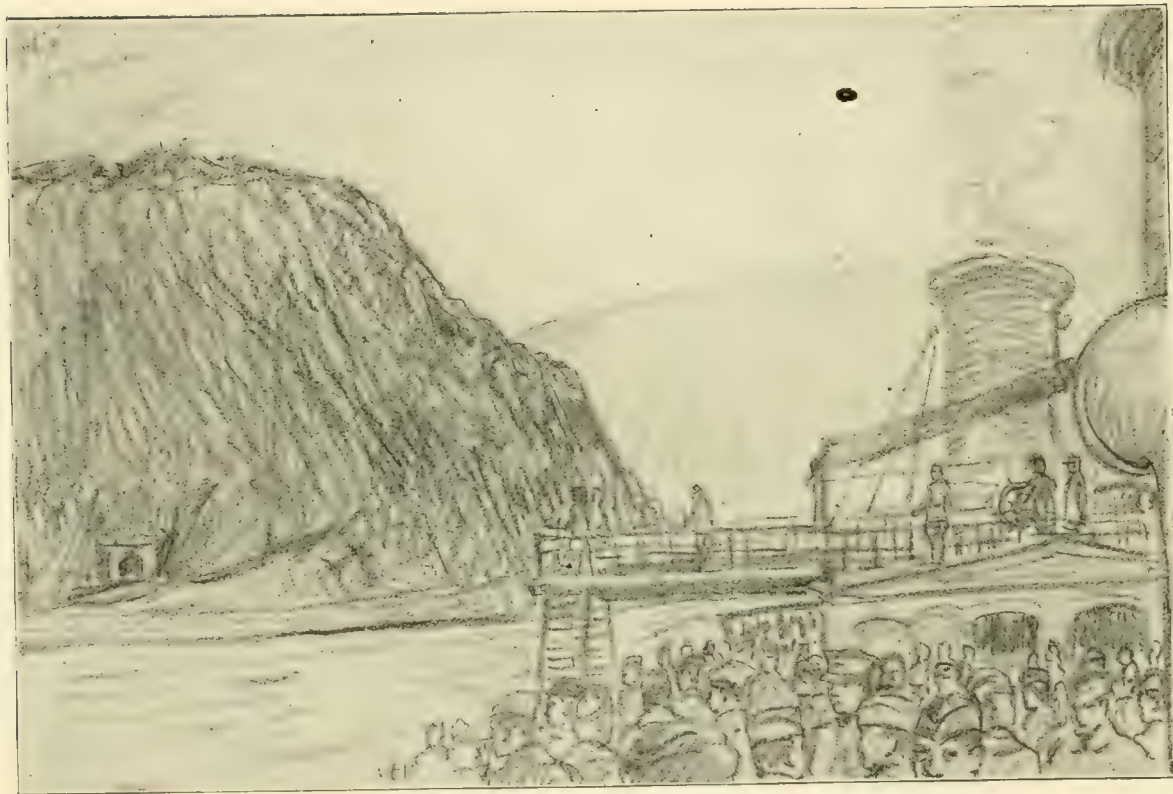


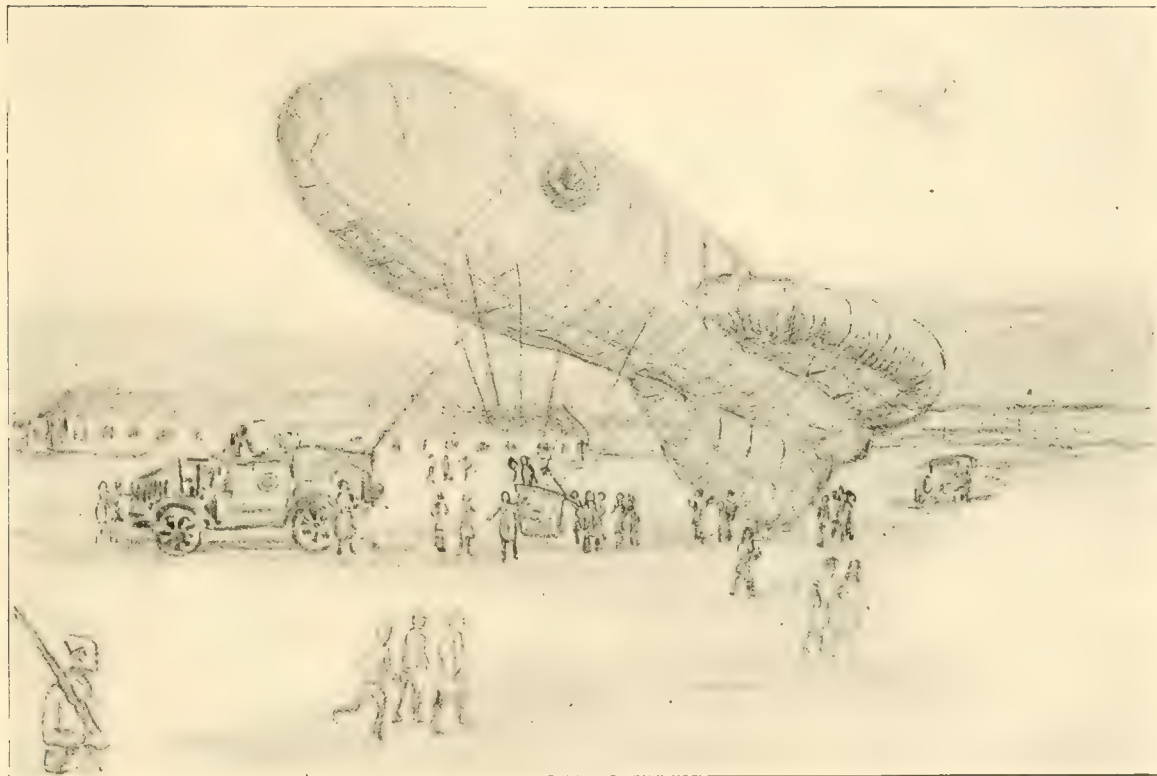
Formerly the Kaiser's



*Castle crowned,
terraced hills at
every turn*

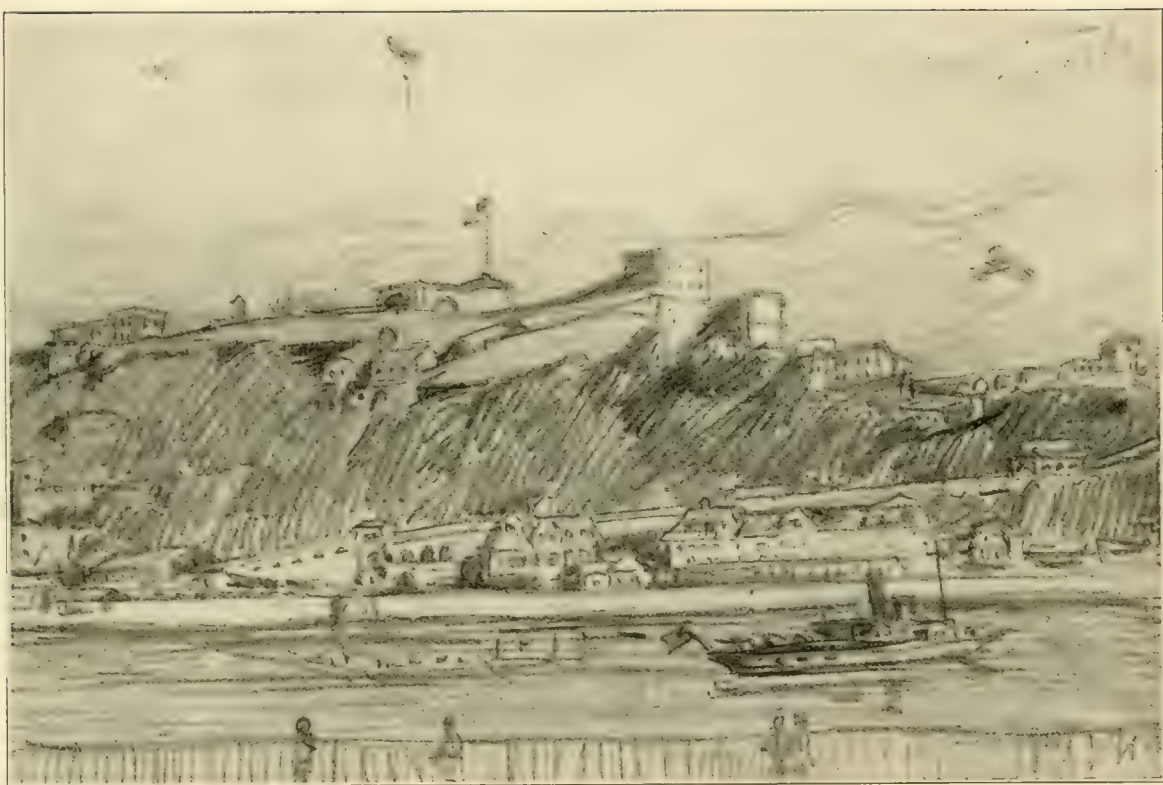
*Down the Rhine,
past the Loreley*





*American "bimp"
on Ehrenbreitstein*

Ehrenbreitstein
Coblenz



"Speak to 'em, dice



God's country at last

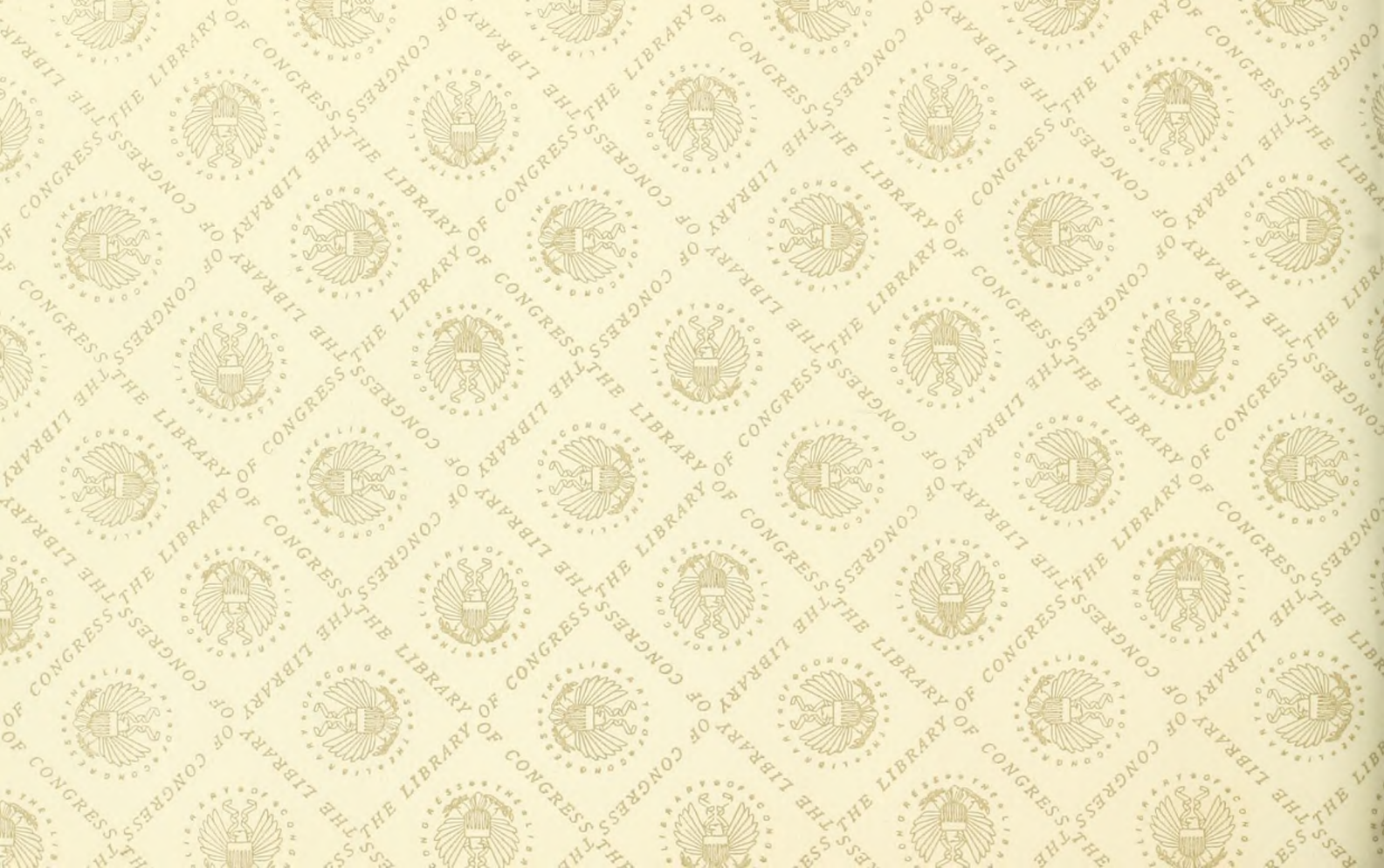


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AND NOW that our story is ended, comes the overpowering temptation to make the eagle scream. So, as our French friends used to cry:

“Vive l’Amerique”

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